

VZCZCXYZ0010
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #0915 1150948
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 250948Z APR 07
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5004
INFO RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6673
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 7924

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 000915

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - LLOYD NEIGHBORS
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. CROSS-STRAIT POLICY

¶11. Summary: All major Chinese-language dailies in Taiwan gave significant coverage on April 25 to President Chen Shui-bian's call Tuesday for a plan to grant sentence commutations to many prison inmates island-wide. News coverage also focused on the year-end legislative elections and the 2008 presidential election, and on Taiwan's 23rd Hang-Kuang military exercise. The pro-status quo "China Times" ran a banner headline on page five that said "Ministry of National Defense Confirms for the First Time: Taiwan's Missiles Are Capable of Launching Counterattacks against Mainland China if the Island Is under Attack."

¶12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" elaborated on an article by John J. Tkacik, a senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, which was carried by the newspaper Monday. The editorial urged the United States to define clearly the status quo of Taiwan's independent sovereignty so as to stop China from using force against the island and to maintain peace in the Taiwan Strait and the West Pacific.
End summary.

"The United States Must Not Adopt a Policy of Strategic Ambiguity toward the 'Determination of Taiwan's Status Quo' Any More"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] editorialized (4/25):

"U.S. Heritage Foundation senior research fellow John J. Tkacik said in a column in this newspaper recently that the United States has constantly stated that it opposes any change in the status quo of Taiwan. But the United States has never clearly defined what Taiwan's status quo is. Tkacik believes that Washington's failure to give a formal and detailed definition of 'the status quo as we determine it is akin to ceding its leading role in [defining] the controversial [status quo] to Beijing and Taipei, and when tension rises [across the Taiwan Strait], American diplomats can only respond reactively, in a panic."

"Tkacik therefore suggested that the U.S. government clearly state its position: Namely, 'the United States neither recognizes nor accepts [Beijing's claim] that China, based on whatever international laws there may be, is entitled to use force or threaten to use force against democratic Taiwan.' Also, 'even if Taiwan declares independence, it will only be a matter of record, which will not change the behavior of any country, nor will it have any impact on China's security situation.' By doing so, it will be essentially telling China that the United States does not, and has never, recognized China's claim over Taiwan's territory. ...

".... Tkacik's proposal that the U.S. government clarify the status quo of Taiwan is aimed at stopping China from using any means, including the use of force, to alter Taiwan's status quo unilaterally. In reality, [if] Washington publicly defines Taiwan's status quo - namely, Taiwan and China are two separate countries -

it will certainly be conducive to regional stability and prevent China from risking danger in desperation. But still, we believe that when it comes to the status quo of Taiwan, one must trace back to its source - an international treaty signed after World War II. Only by doing so can the truth be revealed and Taiwan's status be thoroughly understood, and it can thereby shatter China's self-composed fiction that 'Taiwan is part of China,' ...

"The U.S. government always emphasizes that its one China policy differs from Beijing's one China principle, and [as a result,] Washington's [position of] not recognizing that 'Taiwan is part of China' is self-evident. To define the status quo of Taiwan is not merely aimed at preventing military conflicts across the Taiwan Strait but also at fulfilling the spirit that 'all people are entitled to the right of self-determination' as specified in the United Nations Charter and the International Human Rights Convention. The United States might have been able to adopt an ambiguous strategy regarding the status quo of Taiwan earlier when China's national strength was relatively weaker. But now given China's military expansion and its evident aggressiveness, a clear definition of the status quo of Taiwan's independent sovereignty will be the most effective or even the only countermeasure for the United States to stop China from using force against Taiwan and to maintain peace in the Taiwan Strait and the West Pacific."

YOUNG